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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 009376

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SUBJECT: GOC CONCENTRATES EX-PARAMILITARY DETAINEES IN LA CEJA

REF: BOGOTA 7911

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Rodrigo Tovar Pupo (AKA "Jorge 40") and Freddy Rendon Herrera (AKA "El Aleman") were among four former AUC leaders that President Uribe ordered to be transported to La Ceja October 10. They joined 26 other former AUC representative figures and 34 rank and file members concentrated there. The GOC has strengthened security measures at La Ceja and the police expect to hand over control of the facility to the national prison authority in the next few days. End summary.

Consolidation at La Ceja

¶2. (C) On October 10, the GOC transported four former paramilitary leaders to La Ceja from locations throughout Colombia, including alias Jorge 40 and alias El Aleman. The transfer was, in part, a response to the revelations of Jorge 40's reported on-going links to murders, political corruption, and fraud. By moving Jorge 40 out of Cesar, the GOC will find it easier to control his actions and to rebut media criticism that the ex-paras continue to operate in their areas of influence without restrictions. The GOC has now consolidated all currently detained leaders in La Ceja; within the next week the national prison authority (INPEC) will assume administration of the facility from the national police (CNP).

¶3. (C) A national police (CNP) reports the GOC has recently boosted security measures at La Ceja, including raising walls, adding access controls, and creating stronger internal compound patrols. The CNP has 35 police officers inside La Ceja to cover the 60 demobilized paramilitaries located there (septel), and an additional 60 personnel in the surrounding area, including 17 professional officers at a police station close to the compound. Ten security points surround the perimeter and there is a guard in every hall where the rooms

of the ex-paramilitaries are located. In addition, the main paramilitary leaders and the six extraditable members have a police officer with them at all times.

¶4. (C) Police said the ex-paramilitaries comply with a schedule that involves early rising and completion of chores. They also participate in educational courses and three projects within the compound, including carpentry, the construction of a barn, and fish farming. Each ex-paramilitary member has a room for himself, which includes a twin bed, desk, chairs, television, computer, refrigerator, coffee maker, and books. Visitors are allowed during to specific times with permission from the Peace Commissioner's Office.

CNP Concerns

¶5. (C) The CNP noted the ex-paramilitaries were never a homogeneous group, and rivalries could burst into the open at La Ceja. The CNP also recommended that GOC personnel associated with La Ceja be changed frequently to prevent corruption.

Community Organizes

¶6. (C) DIPOL analysts told us local residents of La Ceja created a committee composed of representatives from local government, parish clergy, labor unions, and three

ex-paramilitary leaders, in response to complaints that local authorities were never consulted about turning La Ceja into a detention center. Other community concerns included the rise in the number of people and vehicles in the city and the increased potential for terrorist attacks by the FARC or ELN against the center or surrounding areas. Residents saw some positives from the increased attention: more police, lower crime, especially homicide, and more business opportunities.

¶7. (C) Local officials said the media outcry that the relatives of the ex-paramilitaries were buying many properties in La Ceja was misplaced. Rather, they explained, some family members had rented properties nearby. The CNP confirmed that 10 ex-paramilitary leaders' family members had rented property, including relatives of Ramiro Vanoy, Ramon Isaza, Carlos Mario Jimenez, and Juan Carlos Sierra.

OAS Role

¶8. (C) OAS observers told us they visit the compound almost daily, on an unofficial basis. The OAS said conditions at La Ceja were "dignified, serious, and austere," as president Uribe had insisted, especially compared with the "luxuries and comforts" the ex-paramilitary leaders were accustomed to. He said the ex-paramilitary leaders, morale was low; since they do not have many people to talk to, they constantly complain to him about their personal situations. We understand OAS/MAP director Sergio Caramagna and Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo made peace after their public confrontations in August (reftel), and that Caramagna hopes Restrepo will officially ask the OAS to monitor the situation inside La Ceja.

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